

Remarks on Maternal and Infant Health Care

May 11, 1992

Thank you, Lou, thank you, Secretary Sullivan, and welcome, everyone. Let me just pay a special thanks to Senator Dale Bumpers and to Congressman Tom Bliley, who have been spearheading many of our prenatal and immunization initiatives on Capitol Hill. They are true leaders for this cause, and we're delighted to see you all here today. Also to Jim Mason, our Assistant Secretary for Health; Bill Roper from Atlanta, doing a superb job as our Director at CDC. And a warm welcome to representatives of the Advertising Council and to all the very special mothers and children who are with us today.

Yesterday, on Mother's Day, millions of Americans took time to appreciate the miracle of motherhood. We thank the mothers who brought us into this world, who taught us our first lessons about life and love and character. Today, we're taking some vital steps to help American mothers, their children, and their families. We're announcing improved standards and a new action plan for immunization. We're beginning a public service ad campaign to promote an innovative prenatal care program called Healthy Start, the program Dr. Sullivan referred to.

Every year in America thousands of babies are delivered at dangerously low birth weights, and too many of these babies die or suffer chronic illness as a result. Thousands of our young children suffer crippling effects each year from measles and other communicable childhood diseases, and some even die. But the saddest fact of all is this: Most of this death and disease is easily preventable through immunization and through better prenatal care. To the extent they are preventable, they too often reflect bad health choices stemming from ignorance of good health behavior or absence of a defined sense of personal responsibility by the parents.

All of our maternal and child health programs are being improved, integrated, and developed to promote the principles of innovation, of community involvement, and personal responsibility. We are using new

and creative approaches to bringing high-risk women into care. To attack this problem we are mobilizing the Nation's best ideas and resources. The hallmarks of our plan can be summed up in two words: immunization and action.

Last June I stood here in the Rose Garden with the Secretary to call for a stronger immunization effort. We sent out teams to six areas of our country to determine how we could do it better. We learned lessons that we're now applying nationwide. I was pleased to be a part of the visit to San Diego in February and happy that representatives of all six communities that we looked at are here with us today.

Today we're announcing a new action plan to get our children vaccinated when it makes the greatest difference, before the age of two. The plan requires more effective coordination to promote vaccination among the various Federal Agencies that serve children. We're helping States and localities with their own immunization plans. And our administration's budget for immunization continues to respond to the need. For fiscal '93, we're seeking an increase to \$349 million. We're also announcing new standards for pediatric immunization, the work of an expert panel representing many private and public sector organizations. They're going to help clinics improve their method to provide vaccination to kids who need them the most.

I salute the leaders again of the Advertising Council for all the volunteer time and talent that you have organized for the cause of infant mortality. I know that public service ad campaigns such as this work. Think of the success of other Ad Council campaigns for kicking the smoking habit, for seatbelt use, for screening for cancer. All such efforts help people show greater responsibility in their own behavior.

Now, I've often thought that the same sort of diligent use of marketing science and communications talents could help motivate Americans to address other problems involving personal responsibility, for in-

stance, in keeping families together, encouraging responsible sexual behavior, and other matters of personal and family well-being. So I'm confident that the Ad Council's new campaign will have strong and positive results.

The Council's messages will emphasize that the health of pregnant women and their unborn babies is a matter of concern to every member of a civilized society. When an expectant mother is financially needy or without a husband or a family to support her, it is all the more urgent for good neighbors to show that they care. The Ad Council's first message, therefore, targets the general public. It calls on all of us for action. The theme that you'll soon be hearing on television is this: We must not accept high rates of infant deaths because this is America.

The second announcement will impress upon men the importance of their role. Whether a man is an unborn child's father or another family member or friend, there is much he can and should do to help an expectant mother. We cannot understate male responsibility.

The third announcement will tell women that proper care begins long before the baby is born. Consider this: Babies born after a pregnancy with no prenatal care are four times more likely to die than those whose mothers received care beginning in the first trimester. The full series assures pregnant women in need that they are not alone. Care is available, and good neighbors are being mobilized to help.

The Healthy Start approach represents what we should be doing to solve our social problems: local solutions, local control, local accountability. The first 15 Healthy Start communities were chosen from a long list of applicants. I understand that representatives of many of these communities from around the Nation are here today, and thank you all for your good work.

We're not weighing down these community initiatives with burdensome Federal mandates and command-and-control regulations. We're seeking to empower neighborhood volunteers in local governments to invent effective new ways to help save babies' lives and keep babies and their mothers strong and healthy.

Healthy Start successes will come from people who see neighbors in need and ask, "What can I do to help?" And they follow through on their generous impulses. And they keep noticing and helping more people. I'm talking about people like Minnie Thomas in Oakland, California. An energetic grandmother, she was helping drug abusers when she learned there was no facility for drug abusers who became pregnant. So she opened her own facility called Solid Foundation. And 47 kids have been born to mothers at Solid Foundation, and not one suffered from low birth weight.

Here in Washington, Tawana Fortune-Jones is the woman with the Mom Van, and she knocks on doors in neighborhoods where infant mortality is high. She's enlisted the cooperation of doctors and clinics to establish a Healthy Start Pregnancy Register. She drives the Mom Van, and each morning at 7 a.m. she begins picking up women and taking them to doctors' offices. Afterwards she takes them home, and then she shuttles another group in the afternoon. She's a friend to women who have no other friends, and she's saved and bettered the lives of hundreds of babies. And she's here with us today. Tawana, where are you now? Right over here. Tawana, good neighbors are the heroes of our cities, and you're the model of a good neighbor. Thank you for what you do.

Unbelievable as it may seem, the innovations of Healthy Start ran into resistance up in Congress where they are still too much wedded to the old bureaucratic ways of doing things. I'm optimistic, though. I believe our approach for empowering people with new ideas is the way of the future. Our crusade for preventive health care for infants and expectant mothers will move a step further when we reform this—overall reform of the health insurance system. I've proposed making every American able to afford a basic health insurance plan of his choice, using credits or vouchers. And through the market system, we would provide needy Americans better health care than they now receive.

These two efforts represent a new way of solving our problems in infant mortality and immunization. Our guiding principle is to

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reach out: Reach out to young parents, make sure they know what they need to do, and then help them to do it; reach out to community organizations; reach out to the private sector; and reach across the artificial lines in our Government so that any program that touches young children and their parents will become an opportunity point for better health.

We have new kinds of problems, and so we've got to think in new ways. We need to think about all the opportunities that we have to draw in young families who may be left out today, to help them, to inform them. We need to enlist them and enlist our communities to work together to help them. All the community organizations have

a tremendous role to play. It's already worked in our six demonstration immunization cities, and I am confident that it's going to work in Healthy Start and in more immunization communities all around this great country.

Thank you all for your leadership. Again, my respects to the two Members of Congress here. Thank the doctors here, and thank all of you working in the communities to make life just a little better for the kids and for the families out there. Thank you all for coming.

Note: The President spoke at 11:16 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House.

Statement by Press Secretary Fitzwater on the President's Meeting With Foreign Minister Roland Dumas of France

May 11, 1992

President Bush and French Foreign Minister Roland Dumas discussed a number of bilateral and regional issues during a 20-minute Oval Office meeting. Minister Dumas said that the development of increased unity within the European Community must be accompanied by efforts to rein-

force ties between Europe and the United States. The President welcomed the desire to strengthen transatlantic ties, which the United States shares completely. The President also noted the need to conclude the Uruguay round trade negotiations.

Remarks in a Roundtable Discussion With the Weed and Seed Revitalization Committee and Community Leaders in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

May 11, 1992

Mr. Michael Baylson. Mr. President, good afternoon. We are honored to welcome you to our "Weed and Seed" neighborhood to meet with the members of the Weed and Seed Neighborhood Revitalization Committee and other community residents.

We want to tell you about some of the innovative programs in Philadelphia. For example, the Violent Traffickers Project, with whom you just met a few minutes ago, has been active in this neighborhood, making

substantial progress arresting the larger drug-trafficking gangs. Also, last week a Federal grand jury returned indictments against 72 defendants, allegedly members of the Cali cartel, their customers, or other major Philadelphia drug dealers, for dumping drugs into this community.

Mr. President, welcome to our "Weed and Seed" area.

The President. Michael, thank you. What I really want to do is listen to people in the